

favor of rational proposals that bolster U.S. security and global competitiveness.

Ms. HART. Mr. Speaker, the REAL ID Act completes the mission of the 9/11 Commission recommendations by implementing common sense reforms to strengthen our borders security and better protect our homeland.

IMPLEMENTING MUCH NEEDED DRIVER'S LICENSE REFORMS

Driver's licenses have become the primary identification document in the United States, enabling individuals to get other identity documents, transfer funds to a U.S. bank account, obtain access to federal buildings and other vulnerable facilities, purchase a firearm, rent a car and board a plane.

Lax standards and loopholes in the current issuance processes allow terrorists to obtain driver's licenses—often multiple licenses from different states—and abuse the license for identification purposes.

The Sept 11th hijackers had, within their possession, at least 15 valid drivers licenses and numerous State issued identity cards with a large variety of addresses.

Identification documents are the last opportunity to ensure that people are who they say they are and to check whether they are terrorists.

The REAL ID Act would require applicants to provide proof they are in the country legally. Currently, eleven states do not have such a requirement, meaning a majority of states have already recognized the need for tighter standards, but unnecessary and dangerous gaps in the system still exist.

The REAL ID Act would require identity documents to expire at the same time as the expiration of lawful entry status, preventing those who have illegally entered or are unlawfully present in the U.S. from having valid identification documents.

States would still issue driver's licenses and identification cards and would control their own driver database.

CLOSING ASYLUM LOOPHOLES

The 9-11 Commission's staff report on "9-11 and Terrorist Travel" found that "a number of terrorists . . . abused the asylum system".

Examples of Terrorists Abusing Our Asylum Laws:

The "Blind Sheik", Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, led a plot to bomb New York City landmarks. Rahman used an asylum application to avoid deportation to Egypt after all other means of remaining in the U.S. failed.

The 9/11 Commission staff report noted that an immigration judge held a hearing on Rahman's asylum claim weeks before his followers bombed the World Trade Center.

During the Republican Convention last August, an illegal alien from Pakistan was picked up and arrested for attempting to bomb the Herald Square subway station and plotting to bomb the Verrazano Narrows bridge. He was quoted as saying that "I want at least 1,000 to 2,000 to die in one day." The alien had applied for asylum.

A number of courts, specifically the 9th Circuit Court has severely undermined current authorities by limiting the factors that judges can consider when assessing the credibility of an alien seeking asylum. This impairment encourages asylum fraud.

The REAL ID Act would strengthen judges' ability to determine whether the asylum seeker is truthful. This provision codifies the factors immigration judges use to assess credibility

and prevents the 9th Circuit from further undermining our national security.

DEFENDING BORDERS

In 1996 Congress approved building the 14 mile long San Diego Border Fence on the Mexico-U.S. border, right next to a major U.S. Navy base.

The San Diego Sector covers an area of more than 7,000 square miles and contains 66 linear miles of international border with Mexico. Directly to the south of the San Diego Sector area of responsibility lie the Mexican cities of Tijuana and Tecate, which have a combined population of more than two million.

For decades, this area had been the preferred corridor for entry into the United States by unknown or undocumented persons due to the highly populated cities north and south of the border, as well as relatively quick access to national transportation hubs such as LAX.

Construction of the fence was halted when radical environmentalists claimed that the area was a habitat of a rare bird. As a result, eight years later, the fence remains incomplete and is an opportunity for aliens to cross the border illegally.

This incomplete fence allows border security gaps to remain open. We must close these gaps because they remain a threat to our national security.

The REAL ID Act will require the completion of this important security fence.

STRENGTHENING DEPORTATION LAWS

Under current immigration laws, prohibitions on some terrorist-related activities only apply to aliens who are trying to enter the U.S., but not to those who already reside within our borders. Therefore, if an alien seeking a visa has been found to participate in certain terrorist-related activity, he/she is prohibited from entering the U.S. But if an alien is found to have participated in the same terrorist activity in the U.S., he/she may not be deportable.

The REAL ID Act would finally make the laws consistent by providing that all terrorist-related offenses and making aliens inadmissible which would also be grounds for their deportation.

The REAL ID Act provides that any alien contributing funds to a terrorist organization would be deportable.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time, and I move the previous question on the resolution.

The previous question was ordered.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

PLAN FOR SECURING THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS, MATERIAL, AND EXPERTISE OF THE STATES OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message

from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on International Relations:

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1205 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2003 (Public Law 107-314), I am providing a report prepared by my Administration on implementation during 2003 of the plan for securing nuclear weapons, material, and expertise of the states of the former Soviet Union.

GEORGE W. BUSH.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 8, 2005.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SENSENBRENNER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 418, soon to be considered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Wisconsin?

There was no objection.

REAL ID ACT OF 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 71 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill, H.R. 418.

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IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the consideration of the bill (H.R. 418) to establish and rapidly implement regulations for State driver's license and identification document security standards, to prevent terrorists from abusing the asylum laws of the United States, to unify terrorism-related grounds for inadmissibility and removal, and to ensure expeditious construction of the San Diego border fence, with Mr. CULBERSON in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to the rule, the bill is considered as having been read the first time.

General debate shall not exceed 1 hour and 40 minutes, with 40 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Judiciary; 40 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Government Reform; and 20 minutes equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Homeland Security.

The gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. SENSENBRENNER) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) each will control 20 minutes of debate from the Committee on the Judiciary.